3: Krige E-5 (1928-1938)1938 FX14 Lovedu FX14

583 [624] be handed over to the lender to become, in most cases, the wife of his son. To-day this custom is not as common as it used to be, owing to the fact that girls now often resist such a marriage, knowing that the European authorities will support them. No cattle or presents from the girl's people are ever handed over in marriage, and there is therefore nothing corresponding to the Zulu-Xhosa *ondlu*. But there is all over the Lowveld a special name and function associated with each beast and goat that is handed over, which, together with the fact that there is generally no fixed number, no organized bargaining, such as that which characterizes Pedi procedure, and that very few people complete payment of bride-price before marriage, illustrate the non-commercial character of this arrangement.

585 The most characteristic feature of marriage ceremonial in the Lowveld is the slow and tedious procession from the girl's to the boy's home, the bridal party having to be persuaded to move at each step by means of gifts, till finally on reaching their destination they have to be carried in on the backs of women from the boy's home, weeping loudly in their distress. There is no central marriage feast, though a goat is killed for the girls who accompany the bride, and no one from the girl's home, except for the bridesmaids, is present. The brilliant competitive dancing displays, mutual vituperations between the two families and general feasting which form part of Nguni marriage ceremonial, all are conspicuously absent in this area where the arrival of a bride hardly disturbs the even tenor of everyday life. It is of common occurrence for a bride, before arrival at her husband's kraal, to be taken to the village of the sister whose cattle the husband has used in the marriage. The sister must see the woman who will bear a wife for her son and will kill a goat in her honour. Blood-mixing ceremonies between bride and bridegroom to eliminate all dangers of sex intercourse are common over the whole area.

•596 Barrenness and adultery are not grounds for divorce, though when a woman is barren her parents generally offer her sister, for whom, however, cattle must again be handed over. A peculiar feature of divorce in the Lowveld to-day is that the husband almost always keeps both the children and the cattle, except in rare cases where it can be proved that he has wrongfully driven away his wife, when he receives neither children nor cattle.

5:Krige E-5 (1936-1938, 1961-1962) 1964
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asked about this the reply was not as I expected it to be, that Andrew's daughters were attending school and would be averse to such a marriage but 'we just gave Kewele to Maseriba because she is *khadi* (i.e., sister in a ritual sense) and "to knit together the family" (*ho suka lelaka*)'. This desire to keep alive the links between brother and sister and to maintain and renew marriage links with women of the lineage from one generation to another is very strong. The marriage of a woman at her father's sister's (i.e., mother's brother's daughter marriage) is called '*ho dzusa malaka*'—to awaken or renew relationship.

There are several variations of mother's brother's daughter marriage that arise from or are bound up with obligations connected with cattle that have passed. If in the case of cattle-linked brother and sister (D and C in Figure 9a), the latter has a daughter but no son who could marry her brother's daughter, she might, rather than break the link with her brother and allow her husband to use the cattle to create new links with strangers, nevertheless, with the agreement and consent of her husband, hand over her daughter E's bride-price to her brother D so that he can marry a second wife and establish a 'house' from which her daughter E may claim a woman later to marry her son and to 'come and cook for her'. Here marriage (of F to G) is with the mother's mother's brother's daughter. When such girl is actually married bride-price will again pass. If, in such a marriage, the woman were to run away or if there were a divorce, both bride-prices could be claimed, as we saw in the 1930's. Today, however, probably as a result of European administrative policy, only one bride-price is paid back, though it is commonly known that both used to be returned.

Besides marriage with the mother's mother's brother's daughter, other variations of mother's brother's daughter marriage are found, such as marriage with the mother's brother's son's daughter (one generation below), with the father's mother's brother's daughter or even with a father's mother's brother's son's daughter.

The fact that in the above example of marriage with the mother's mother's brother's daughter two lots of bride-price are handed over yet only one bride is received, indicates that the economic aspect is not paramount; it is the permanent link

5:Krige E-S (1936-1938, 1961-1962) 1964
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daughter; (2) his father's mother's brother's daughter; (3) a distant relative of his mother's; (4) his mother's fellow-wife's brother's daughter; (5) a sister to his first wife by the same father but a different mother.

Divorce

The use of a woman's bride-price by her brother, and the interest which his cattle-linked sister has in maintaining this 'house' in which her son will find a wife, made divorce difficult in the old days. Today, however, partly owing to migrant labour, divorce is more common and girls, especially in the case of arranged marriages with old men or cross-cousins, quite frequently run away to a lover either before or after the marriage knowing that they cannot any longer be forced to return. A return of the bride-price is not always insisted upon, as in the case of A who chased away his childless wife for being a thief. Her brother had used the cattle so A was satisfied to accept the arrangement that the brother should give his daughter in marriage to A's son by another wife. When there are complicated cattle claims a husband, especially if he is already old, may find it wiser not to press for a divorce if a wife absconds. P's third wife, who had been procured with the bride-price of the daughter of his first wife ran home with her three children and began to lead a promiscuous life during which a fourth child was born. Beyond trying to persuade her people to make her return, P did nothing. The children, two girls and two boys, were his and his first wife had a claim on the bride-price of one of the girls. Eventually, when the two daughters were married, P secured their bride-price; the two sons earned their own marriage-cattle by working; and when P died, the eldest son of that 'house' was called to come and receive his share of the inheritance.

The rule in Lobedu divorce was, in the old days, that the husband's family should receive back the full bride-price plus all increase, irrespective of where the blame lay, in accordance with the saying, '*mosila mobe o boya le noto ea hwe*—even the bad workman (husband) returns with his tools'. The children went with their mother to her people and when she remarried, the new husband had a right to all of them. With European

S:Krige E-5 (1936-1938,1961-1962) 1964
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administration came the introduction of the Pedi idea that a man has a claim to both the cattle and the children in the case of malicious desertion. Old men in the 1930's called this a white man's law; today people are claiming it as a Lobedu custom. Only two of the oldest men at court were able to tell me in 1961 what had been common knowledge in 1936. The present custom is for the husband on receiving back the bride-price to return some of it (one beast for each child or sometimes two for a girl) for the rearing of the younger children that remain temporarily with their mother. A father's hold over such children is in practice tenuous though the court will always uphold his claims.

The issues in divorce are rarely simple. The simplest case I came across was one in which a man became insane. His wife left with her children to live with her brother who returned the bride-price. Usually, however, there are endless complications and cases continue for months, even years. If, for example, a man chases his wife and children away and the wife wants to return, he may in the end lose both the children and the bride-price despite the proverb quoted above.

The Domestic Group and the Importance of the 'House'

We have discussed the role of property in establishing and maintaining marriage relationships and links between families. Control over material resources also plays an important part in the structure of the polygynous domestic group with its economically independent 'houses' so characteristic of the Lobedu.

As head of the family the husband has full control over all family resources. Yet each wife forms with her children a unit of production and consumption, the independence of which as against other 'houses' has to be respected even by the husband, whose control thus becomes limited the moment he marries a second wife. This is why a Christian woman among the Lobedu never has the economic independence that a woman in a polygynous household has. There are safeguards against the infringement of the principle of the independence of the 'house', as we shall see.

Though women do most of the cultivation, the Lobedu

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also an economic unit, the Lobedu wife enjoys considerable economic freedom in the disposal of her property. Though she should act in consultation with her husband in the disposal of livestock or large amounts of surplus crops she will often, especially if on bad terms with her husband, act on her own. All these activities, it should however be remembered, are for the advancement of her 'house', which belongs to the husband's lineage. These goods can neither accrue to nor be used by the wife's own relatives. If, for example, she leaves her husband or is divorced she cannot take any of the produce of her fields with her. On the other hand the husband could use such crops or livestock only for the advancement or to feed the children of that 'house,' not for other 'houses'. The only goods a woman may take with her on divorce are cattle or other livestock earned by practising as a doctor because in this case, it is said, she has spirits guiding her which are of her own, not her husband's family.

The Lobedu husband does not in the manner of the Nguni allocate cattle to the 'house' of each wife (milk plays little or no part in the diet). It is said, however, that even if a cow were to be allocated to a house for milking purposes it would not belong to that 'house'. Cattle that come in from the marriage of a daughter are the property of her mother's 'house' and should be used for acquiring a wife for a son of that house. If the son is young and the husband wishes to use his daughter's cattle for a wife for himself, such wife would have to cook for the woman of that house from which the cattle came in the manner of a daughter-in-law. In theory a husband has the right to decide how the cattle of any 'house' are to be used. But he rarely in practice acts against the wishes of the wife. Her right over any woman acquired by the cattle of her daughter gives her great power and makes it difficult for her husband to marry a wife with them himself against her wishes. The bride might run away or her people refuse to let her marry if they hear that the woman the bride will have to 'stamp for' opposes the marriage. That is why so often cattle are handed to the wife's brother in the manner described above.

It is said, '*moha ha o la yo mongwe*—houses do not eat one another', i.e., the property of one house cannot be used for the advancement of another. Hence bride-price of the girl of one

5:Krige E-5 (1936-1938, 1961-1962) 1964
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suggesting that as the first wife was not strong they should send her uterine sister as a little 'follower' to help her. Finding that her son was agreeable she reported the matter to his eldest half-brother, head of the homestead, who discussed the matter with his brothers.

The ultimate guarantor of the interests and economic independence of the 'house' is the cattle-linked sister with whose bride-price the wife was obtained. As we have seen, she occupies a very special position in the 'house' built by her cattle. Even before her brother's bridal party arrives at his homestead with the new bride she is taken to his married sister's homestead where a goat is slaughtered for her in recognition of their special relationship. When the sister visits her old home she will 'put down her things' and make herself at home in the hut of this wife of her brother. She is the first to be called to beer there; she must be invited to all activities such as work-parties held by the 'house'; all sickness is reported to her; she is called in to discuss the marriage of all sons and daughters of that 'house'. She or her eldest uterine sister is the one who magically protects a new homestead by drawing a medicated branch in a magical circle around it. If her father and mother are dead she sees to it that her brother treats his wife properly. He cannot chase her away or divorce her unless his sister believes his action to be justifiable; and she may, and very often does, take her brother's wife to live with her in her husband's village if he ill-treats her. She has an interest in this 'house' for here her son will find a wife. When her brother dies it is she and her sisters who will distribute the inheritance. The sanction for her control is a religious one: if she is 'dissatisfied in her heart' this may 'stir up the ancestors' and cause a child of her brother to be ill—a very powerful weapon.

Development of a House

Let us consider the growth and development of a house for it is only by a very gradual process that a house reaches full stature. The marriage of every woman marks the birth of a new unit which may become in time an independent homestead though it does not always do so. This is possible at the earliest only when the eldest son has married a wife and

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given to the son of deceased's youngest wife who had deserted him; two goats were killed for the widow of the deceased's eldest son by his first wife when she came from Johannesburg to pay a visit of condolence. Deceased's field was a *lushupe*, a site of their previous village, and as is the custom with such a field, was divided between his wives. His mealies were equally divided between all his wives, his own daughters who were present at the ceremony also receiving some. In the case of Mathekha, all his cattle were given by the *khadi* (his sister) to his eldest son by his chief wife, a man who was a prominent councillor of the queen. It was understood they would be used for helping his brothers and half-brothers to marry. The old man's blankets and money were divided among all his children, the elder ones receiving £1 10s. 0d., the smaller ones only 10s. The wives of a deceased man if they are still of childbearing age are allocated to his brothers or, in the case of a very young wife, sometimes to the chief son and heir. It is his responsibility to hold the family together after the death of his father. The division of the property is made on the day of purification from mourning (*khithila*) about a year after the death when all the relatives have gathered together. The person responsible for the division of the inheritance in property and wives is the eldest uterine sister of the deceased who acts in consultation with her sisters, especially the cattle-linked sister of the deceased. If there is no uterine sister the deceased's eldest daughter takes her place. She will act in consultation with her father's brother if one is still alive. In allocating wives some consideration is generally given to the wishes of the parties concerned.

When the heir is a minor, a brother of the deceased, usually the one who inherits the mother of the heir, may be chosen to act as regent. But he must be careful to act only in consultation with the *khadi*. In many instances in the case of the death of a district head when the *khadi* (sister of deceased) is old or a widow and free to leave her husband's homestead she may herself come to rule in her brother's village. When M. died, the son of his chief wife was still a child so his uterine sister, a widow, came to rule, while the younger half-brother of the deceased returned from another area where he had been living to set up his village near by in order to raise seed to his half-brother by the chief wife and help his half-sister by conducting